

advanced, unwonted signs of human life could be seen on the borders of the lake. Here was a rough clearing. The trees had been burned; there was a rude and desolate gap in the sombre green of the pine forest. Dead trunks, blasted and black with fire, stood grimly upright amid the charred stumps and prostrate bodies of comrades half consumed. In the intervening spaces, the soil had been feebly scratched with hoes of wood or bone, and a crop of maize was growing, now some four inches high. (1) The dwellings of these slovenly farmers, framed of poles covered with sheets of bark, were scattered here and there, singly or in groups, while their tenants were running to the shore in amazement. Warriors stood with their hands over their mouths,—the usual Indian attitude of astonishment; squaws stared betwixt curiosity and fear; naked papposes screamed and ran. The chief, Nibachis, offered the calumet, then harangued the crowd: "These whitemen must have fallen from the clouds. How else could they have reached us through the woods and rapids which even we find it hard to pass? The French chief can do anything. All we have heard of him must be true." And they hastened to regale the hungry visitors with a repast of fish.

Champlain asked for guidance to the settlements above. It was readily granted. Escorted by his friendly hosts, he advanced beyond the head of Lake Coulonge, and, landing, saw the unaccustomed sight of pathways through the forest. They led to the clearings and cabins of a chief named Tessouat, who, amazed at the apparition of the white strangers, exclaimed that he must be in a dream. (2) Next, the voyagers crossed to the neighboring island, then deeply wooded with pine, elm, and oak. Here were more desolate clearings, more rude cornfields and bark-build cabins. Here, too, was a cemetery, which excited the wonder of Champlain, for the dead were better cared for than the living. Over each grave a flat tablet of wood was supported on posts, and at one end stood an upright tablet, carved with an intended representation of the features of the deceased. If a chief, the head was adorned with a plume. If a warrior, there were figures near it of a shield, a lance, a war-club, and a bow and arrows; if a boy, of a small bow and one arrow; and if a woman or a girl, of a kettle, an earthen pot, a wooden spoon, and a paddle. The whole was decorated with red and yellow paint; and beneath slept the departed, wrapped in a robe of skins, his earthly treasures about him, ready for use in the land of souls.

Tessouat was to give a *tabagie*, or solemn feast, in honor of Champlain, and the chiefs and elders of the island were invited. Runners were sent to summon the guests from neighboring hamlets; and, on the morrow, Tessouat's squaws swept his cabin for the festivity. Then Champlain and his Frenchmen were seated on skins in the place of honor, and the naked guests appeared in quick succession, each with his wooden dish and spoon, and each ejaculating his guttural salute as he stooped at the low door. The spacious cabin was full. The congregated wisdom and prowess of the nation sat expectant on the bare earth. Each long, bare arm thrust forth its dish in turn as the host served out the banquet, in which, as courtesy enjoined, he himself was to

have no share. First, a mess of pounded maize wherein were boiled, without salt, morsels of fish and dark scraps of meat; then, fish and flesh broiled on the embers, with a kettle of cold water from the river. Champlain, in wise distrust of Ottawa cookery, confined himself to the simpler and less doubtful viands. A few minutes, and all alike had vanished. The kettles were empty. Then pipes were filled and touched with fire brought in by the dutious squaws, while the young men who had stood thronged about the entrance now modestly withdrew, and the door was closed for counsel. (1)

First, the pipes were passed to Champlain. Then, for full half an hour, the assembly smoked in silence. At length, when the fitting time was come, he addressed them in a speech in which he declared, that, moved by affection, he visited their country to see its richness and its beauty, and to aid them in their wars; and he now begged them to furnish him with four canoes and eight men, to convey him to the country of the Nipissings, a tribe dwelling northward on the lake which bears their name. (2)

His audience looked grave, for they were but cold and jealous friends of the Nipissings. For a time they discoursed in murmuring tones among themselves, all smoking meanwhile with redoubled vigor. Then Tessouat, chief of these forest republicans, rose and spoke in behalf of all.

"We always knew you for our best friend among the Frenchmen. We love you like our own children. But why did you break your word with us last year when we all went down to meet you at Montreal to give you presents and go with you to war? You were not there, but other Frenchmen were there who abused us. We will never go again. As for the four canoes, you shall have them if you insist upon it; but it grieves us to think of the hardships you must endure. The Nipissings have weak hearts. They are good for nothing in war, but they kill us with charms, and they poison us. Therefore we are on bad terms with them. They will kill you, too."

Such was the pith of Tessouat's discourse, and at each clause, the conclave responded in unison with an approving grunt.

Champlain urged his petition; sought to relieve their tender scruples in his behalf; assured them that he was charm-proof, and that he feared no hardships. At length he gained his point. The canoes and the men were promised, and, seeing himself as he thought on the highway to his phantom Northern Sea, he left his entertainers to their pipes, and with a light heart issued from the close and smoky den to breathe the fresh air of the afternoon. He visited the Indian fields, with their young crops of pumpkins, beans, and French peas,—the last a novelty obtained from the traders. (3) Here, Thomas, the interpreter, soon joined him with a countenance of ill news. In the absence of Champlain, the assembly had reconsidered their assent. The canoes were denied.

With a troubled mind he hastened again to the hall of council, and addressed the naked senate in terms better suited to his exigencies than to their dignity.

"I thought you were men; I thought you would hold fast to

(1) Champlain's account of this feast (*Quatrieme Voyage*, 32) is unusually minute and graphic. In every particular—excepting the pounded maize—it might, as the writer can attest, be taken as the description of a similar feast among some of the tribes of the Far West at the present day, as, for example, one of the remoter bands of the Dacotah, a race radically distinct from the Algonquin.

(2) The *Nebeccerini* of Champlain, called also *Nipissingues*, *Nipissiriniens*, *Nipissiriniens*, *Bissiriniens*, *Epiciriniens*, by various early French writers. They are the *Ashikouanheronons* of Lalemant, who borrowed the name from the Huron tongue, and were also called *Sorciers* from their ill repute as magicians.

They belonged, like the Ottawas, to the great Algonquin family, and are considered by Charlevoix (*Journal Historique*, 186) as alone preserving the original type of that race and language. They had, however, borrowed certain usages from their Huron neighbors.

(3) "Pour passer le reste du jour, je fus me pourmener par les jardins, qui n'étoient remplis que de quelques citrouilles, phasioles, et de nos pois, qu'ils commencent à cultiver, où Thomas, mon truchement, qui entendoit fort bien la langue, me vint trouver," etc.—*Champlain*, (1632), l. IV. c. II.

As the Ottawas were at first called Algonquin, so all the Algonquin tribes of the Great Lakes were afterwards, without distinction, called Ottawas, because the latter had first become known to the French. Dablon, *Relation*, 1670, c. X.

Isle des Allumettes was called also Isle du Borgne, from a renowned one-eyed chief who made his abode here, and who, after greatly exasperating the Jesuits by his evil courses, at last became a convert and died in the Faith. They regarded the people of this island as the haughtiest of all the tribes. Le Jeune, *Relation*, 1636, 230.

(1) Champlain, *Quatrieme Voyage*, 29. This a pamphlet of fifty-two pages, containing the journal of his voyage of 1613, and apparently published at the close of that year.

(2) Tessouat's village seems to have been on the Lower Lake des Allumettes, a wide expansion of that arm of the Ottawa which flows along the southern side of Isle des Allumettes. Champlain is clearly wrong, by one degree, in his reckoning of the latitude,—47° for 46°. Tessouat was father, or predecessor, of the chief Le Borgne, whose Indian name was the same. See note, *ante*, p. 347.